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1. Your reference	02.0013-Sen/P121/GB/AJW	
2. Patent application number *(The Patent Office will fill in this part)*	**0207594.3**	‑2 APR 2002
3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant *(underline all surnames)*	Sendo International Limited 1601-3 Kinwick Center 32 Hollywood Road, Central, Hong Kong	
Patents ADP number *(if you know it)*	820313500l	
If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation	Hong Kong	
4. Title of the invention	MECHANISM FOR OBTAINING AND PAYING FOR POSTAGE	

5. Name of your agent *(if you have one)*

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent *(including the postcode)*

Antony Wray

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Patents ADP number *(if you know it)*　　~~822593000l~~　　08406894001.

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7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application	Number of earlier application		Date of filing *(day / month / year)*

8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request? *(Answer 'Yes' if*

　a) *any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or*
　b) *there is an inventor who is not named as an applicant, or*
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Claim(s)	6
Abstract	1
Drawing(s)	3

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Translations of priority documents

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Request for preliminary examination
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Request for substantive examination
(Patents Form 10/77)

Any other documents
(please specify)

11. I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature _____ Date **02 April 2002**

12. Name and daytime telephone number of
person to contact in the United Kingdom **Antony Wray** **01256 816233**

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- 1 -

MECHANISM FOR OBTAINING AND PAYING FOR POSTAGE

Field of the Invention

5   This invention relates to a method for obtaining a code
to be used for postage. The invention is applicable to,
but not limited to, a method for obtaining and paying for
a postage code utilising a wireless communication device
such as a mobile phone.

10

Background of the Invention

It is known to purchase postage stamps in order to pay
for the postage of, for example, a letter. A person
15   wishing to send a letter by post is required to go to a
shop, or the like, to purchase the postage stamp(s).
This not only requires the person to travel to the shop,
but also limits the person to purchasing the stamp(s) at
a time when the shop is open.

20

A known method, which alleviates the above-mentioned
problems, has recently been implemented by the German
postal service, Deutsche Post, under the name "Stampit"
as described at:

25

     http://www.deutschepost.de/brief/stampiten/.

This system provides a method of franking post using a
personal computer, or similar appliance, connected to the
30   Internet. A user installs a required software
application onto their computer, or similar appliance,

- 2 -

and registers to use the "Stampit" service.   The user
also needs to set up a payment method. .

Once the user has registered, the user is able to
5   purchase postage credit over the Internet, which is
subsequently stored in their postage account.
Subsequently, when the user wishes to send an item of
post, they select the type of postage they require.   The
computer then connects to the "Stampit" server on the
10   Internet, and requests a matrix code. ,The "Stampit"
server sends the matrix code back to the computer, which
can then be printed onto, for example, an envelope in
place of a stamp.   The price of the postage is then
deducted from the user's credit in their postage account.
15

This method provides the advantage that the user is not
required to travel to a shop or the like and purchase
postage stamps.   Furthermore, the user is able to
purchase postage at a time convenient to them, rather
20   than being limited by the opening times of a shop or the
like.

However, the inventor of the present invention has
recognised significant limitations with the above method.
25   In particular, the Deutsche Post system suffers from the
drawback that the user is required to have a computer, or
similar appliance, that is capable of connecting to the
Internet.   It also requires the user to provide payment
information over the Internet, and that account details
30   of the user are stored on the Internet.   Furthermore, the
method suffers from the requirement to set up accounts

— 3 —

from which postage is paid and purchasing significant
amounts of postage credit to justify supporting the
"Stampit" service.

5   However, it is envisaged by the inventor of the present
invention that an individual is more likely to spend
substantially smaller amounts of money on postage.
Notably, such small amounts would not justify the setting
up of a "Stampit" account. As a consequence, the

10   inventor of the present invention envisages that the
Deutsche Post "Stampit" system will rarely be utilised by
individual users or small groups.

Thus, a need exists for an improved method for obtaining

15 · and paying for postage, particularly for individuals or
small groups, wherein the abovementioned disadvantages
may be alleviated.

Statement of Invention

20

In accordance with a first aspect of the present
invention, there is provided a method for obtaining a
postage verification code, as claimed in Claim 1.

25   In accordance with a second aspect of the present
invention, there is provided wireless communication
device, as claimed in Claim 11

In accordance with a third aspect of the present

30   invention, there is provided a Postal server, as claimed
in Claim 13.

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— 4 —

In accordance with a fourth aspect of the present invention, there is provided a storage medium storing processor-implementable instructions, as claimed in Claim

5   14.

In accordance with a fifth aspect of the present invention, there is provided a Postal server, as claimed in Claim 15.

10

In accordance with a sixth aspect of the present invention, there is provided a Postal sorting machine, as claimed in Claim 19.

15   Further aspects of the present invention are as defined in the dependent Claims.

In summary, a mechanism, corresponding apparatus and method for obtaining and paying for a postage

20   verification code are described. Preferably, a wireless communication device, such as a mobile phone, is used in the process. By using a wireless communication device and wireless communication network, payment information for postage verification codes do not need to be

25   communicated. The postage charges can be added to, say, a monthly bill for the user's wireless communication device.

Brief Description of the Drawings

30

- 5 -

Exemplary embodiments of the present invention will now
be described, by way of example only, with reference to
the accompanying drawings, in which:

5   Figure 1 illustrates a wireless communication system
adapted to support the inventive concepts of the
preferred embodiments of the present invention,

Figure 2 illustrates a flow diagram of a process for a
10   user to obtain a postage verification code in accordance
with the preferred embodiment of the present invention,
and

Figure 3 illustrates the postal server of figure 1 in
15   more detail, in accordance with the preferred embodiment
of the present invention.

Description of Preferred Embodiments

20   In summary, the present invention proposes a method and
associated apparatus for obtaining a postage verification
code, the method and associated apparatus being described
utilising a communication device, such as a mobile phone.
The preferred embodiment of the present invention is
25   described with reference to a portable cellular phone
capable of operating in, for example, current and/or
future generations of wireless cellular technology.
However, it is within the contemplation of the present
invention that the inventive concepts described herein
30   are equally applicable to any other fixed or wireless
communication device, such as a personal data assistant

- 6 -

(PDA), a portable or mobile radio, a laptop computer or a
wirelessly networked personal computer (PC) or indeed any
other wireless communication device that a mobile user
may possess whilst wishing to remotely obtain a postage
5   code/stamp.

Figure 1 illustrates a preferred arrangement 100 for
implementing the present invention. A postal server 110
is capable of generating postage verification codes. The
10   postage verification codes are preferably generated upon
request from, for example, an individual wishing to post
an item such as a letter. Such an individual wirelessly
transmits a postage verification code request message
from a mobile communications device, which for the
15   illustrated embodiment is in the form of a mobile phone
120, to a postal server 110.

Such a wireless request message may be made in any
appropriate manner. For example, and as illustrated, the
20   user of a mobile phone 120 may wirelessly transmit such a
request message by way of a Short Message Service (SMS)
message sent to a Postal Server's telephone number via a
Global System for Mobile communications (GSM) network
(not shown). For other wireless communication devices
25   any other communication link, provided between the mobile
phone 120 and the postal server 110, may be used.

The GSM Short Message Service is defined in the following
sections of the GSM specification:

GSM 03.40: Digital cellular telecommunications system; Technical realization of the Short Message Service (SMS); Point-to-Point (PP); and

5   GSM 04.11: Digital cellular telecommunications system; Point-to-Point (PP) Short Message Service (SMS) support on mobile radio interface.

The wireless request message may alternatively be sent
10   using any other appropriate means available, for example using the GSM Unstructured Supplementary Service Data mechanism, defined in the GSM standard in the documents GSM 02.90 (USSD Stage 1) and GSM 03.90 (USSD Stage 2).

15   The wireless request message preferably includes information relating to the type of postage required by the user. For example, such information may include at least one or more of the following:

        (i) The price of the postage required;
20   (ii) The weight of the letter/parcel to be posted;
        (iii) The class of postage (e.g. in the United Kingdom 1st class or 2nd class); and/or
        (iv) An indication of the destination (e.g. post/zip code) of the letter/parcel to be posted.
25

Alternatively, the postal server 110 may include a number of telephone numbers, where each number corresponds to a price, class, etc. of postage. Thus, by selecting the appropriate telephone number to send the wireless request
30   message to, the user correspondingly selects the type of postage that the user requires.

P121/GB/Sen/Hepburn

- 8 -

It is envisaged that the wireless request message may further include information identifying the user. For example, such information may include at least one or
5   more of the following:

(i) The name of the user;

(ii) The mobile telephone number of the user;

(iii) The International Mobile Subscriber Identification (IMSI) number of the Subscriber Identity
10   Module (SIM) of the user; and/or

(iv) The International Mobile Equipment Identification (IMEI) number of the mobile phone 120.

It is further envisaged that such information identifying
15   the user may be provided within the data of the request message transmitted by the mobile phone 120 to the postal server 110. Alternatively, the information may be included within the structure of the message, for example within a section of a header of the request message.
20

On receipt of the request message, the postal server 110 extracts from the message the information relating to the type of postage required by the user. Alternatively, where the telephone number to which the message is sent
25   defines the type of postage required, the postal server 110·ascertains the type of postage required. The postal server 110 preferably also identifies the identity of the user, at this time, so that appropriate postal charges can be added to, say, the user's monthly mobile phone
30   bill.

- 9 -

Preferably, the information relating to the identity of
the user includes the mobile telephone number of the
user. However, where such information includes the IMSI,
IMEI and/or name of the user, the postal server uses such
5   information to obtain the mobile telephone number of the
user.

Where it is necessary for the postal server 110 to obtain
the mobile telephone number of the user, this may be
10 performed in any available manner. For example, the user
may have pre-registered with the postal server 110,
providing details such as name, mobile telephone number,
IMEI, IMSI etc. Alternatively, the postal server 110 may
have access to one or more databases from which the
15 postal server 110 is able to obtain the mobile telephone
number of the user from the name, IMEI and/or IMSI of the
user. Such databases may be provided by network
operators, one of which the user is subscribed with, or
any other third party. Such databases may even be
20 maintained by the administrator of the postal server 110
itself, the data for which can be obtained from network
operators, etc.

Having obtained/ascertained the type of postage required,
25 and the mobile telephone number of the user, the postal
server 110 generates a postage verification code, which
it sends back to the mobile phone 120 of the user, for
example by any suitable mechanism such as a SMS or a USSD
message.

30

- 10 -

On receipt of the postage verification code, the mobile
phone 120 may display, or otherwise provide to the user,
the postage verification code. The user is then able to
write, print or otherwise apply/affix the code to the

5   envelope or external surface of the letter/parcel to be
posted, in place of a traditional stamp.

The postage verification code generated by the postal
server 110 is preferably generated using information

10 obtained from the wireless request received from the
user. For example, in a preferred embodiment, the
request from the user contains the destination post/zip
code of the letter/parcel. The postal server 110, for
example utilising an encoding algorithm, uses the

15 addressee's postcode, and perhaps the sender's
identifier, to generate a request-specific postage
verification code. Other relevant information may also
be used in generating the postage verification code, such
as the date and/or time of the request, the mobile

20 telephone number of the user, etc. By using such
information, the postage verification code generated may
be unique for each request.

Preferably, the generated code includes a string of

25 alphanumeric characters, which to the user is
meaningless, the information being used to generate it
not being apparent to the user. This reduces the
likelihood of a person attempting to randomly
generate/forge postage verification codes.

30

- 11 -

It is within the contemplation of the invention that a
microprocessor of the mobile phone 120 (or other wireless
communication device) may be re-programmed with an
algorithm (such as that described with respect to FIG. 2)
5   supporting the inventive concepts of the present
invention, as described above. Furthermore, it is
envisaged that wireless postage payment data, such as
optional telephone numbers to obtain a particular price,
class of postage, may be input to a memory element
10 associated with the microprocessor. More generally,
according to the preferred embodiment of the present
invention, such re-programming to facilitate a request
and reception of a postage code, may be implemented in a
respective mobile phone 120 (or other wireless
15 communication device) in any suitable manner. For
example, a new memory chip or processor may be added to a
conventional mobile phone 120 (or other wireless
communication device). As such, the required adaptation
may be implemented in the form of processor-implementable
20 instructions stored on a storage medium, such as a floppy
disk, hard disk, programmable read only memory (PROM),
random access memory (RAM) or any combination of these or
other storage media. Alternatively, such a re-
programming operation may be achieved using over-the-air-
25 reprogramming (OTAR) of the mobile phone 120.

Figure 2 is a flow diagram of a preferred process 200 for
a user to obtain wirelessly a postage verification code.
The user initiates the process, in step 210, by sending,
30 for example, an SMS message to the postal server. The
message contains a request for a postage verification

- 12 -

code. The message preferably also contains the
destination post/zip code and any information that may be
required by the postal server to generate the postage
verification code. The mobile telephone number of the
5   user is preferably also included in the request message,
for example within the structure of the message, such as
in a part of the header of the message.

In step 220 of the process, the postal server receives
10   the request message. The required information,
preferably including the mobile telephone number of the
user, is extracted from the message. The postal server
in the next step 230, using the information extracted
from the request message, then generates the postage
15   verification code.

Next, the postal server sends an SMS message back to the
mobile phone 120 of the user, as shown in step 240.
Advantageously, an identification of the mobile phone 120
20   or the user of the mobile phone 120 has been ascertained
such that a charge associated with the postage
verification code can be attributed to the mobile phone
120.

25   The message transmitted to the mobile phone 120 contains
the requested postage verification code. In the next
step 250, this message is received by the mobile phone
120 of the user and displayed, or otherwise provided, to
the user. In the final step 260, the user, writes,
30   prints or otherwise applies/affixes the postage

- 13 -

verification code to the item, such as a letter/parcel,
to be posted.

Figure 3 illustrates the postal server 110 of figure 1 in
5   more detail. The postal server 110 comprises an
interface port 320, through which the postal server is
capable of sending and receiving information and messages
via, for example, the Internet 140. The postal server
110 further includes a decoder 330 that decodes the
10   wireless message requesting a postage verification code.
The decoder 330 preferably includes a buffer 340, which
for the illustrated embodiment is a first-in first-out
(FIFO) buffer, to co-ordinate multiple received requests
in a controlled manner. The postal server 110 further
15   includes an encoding software application 350 to generate
the postage verification codes, preferably operably
coupled to a database 360, for use in subsequently
validating postage verification codes applied to posted
items.
20

Also connected to, or forming a part of, the Internet 140
is an SMS interface server 370, which is connected to a
mobile communication network such as a GSM network 380.
When a user sends a request for a postage verification
25   code using an SMS message, the message is transmitted
over the GSM network 380 to the SMS interface server 370.
The SMS interface server 370 converts the SMS message
into a hypertext mark-up language (HTML) format message
and transmits the message, via the Internet 140, to the
30   postal server 110.

— 14 —

The HTML format message is received by the postal server
110 at interface port 320, which takes the message,
decodes it in decoder 330 and stores it in the buffer
340. The message is then read by the encoding software

5   application 350 and the required information extracted.
The encoding software application 350 then generates a
substantially unique postage verification code. The
encoding software application 350 subsequently creates an
HTML format message containing the postage verification

10 code and transmits the code, via the interface port 320,
over the Internet 140 to the SMS Interface Server 370.
The encoding software application 350 also preferably
stores the postage verification code in the database 360.
Furthermore, it is envisaged that the encoding software

15 application 350 may also store the information extracted
from the request message and the mobile telephone number
of the user in the database.

It is within the contemplation of the invention that the

20 functionality of the encoding software application 350
may be implemented in hardware, software or firmware,
dependent upon the particular constraints or design of
the Postal Server 110.

25 Although for the illustrated embodiment the database 360
is provided as a part of the postal server 110, it will
be appreciated that the database 360 may be provided
remote from the postal server 110, being hosted by, for
example, a different server. In this scenario, the

30 postage verification code and any associated data is sent
to the host of the database 360 via the Internet 140, or

via any other suitable alternative means, where it is
stored in the database.

The SMS interface server 370 converts the HTML message to
5   an SMS message, and transmits it over the GSM network 380
back to the user of the mobile phone 120, using the
mobile telephone number of the user provided in the HTML
message from the postal server 110. On receipt and
decoding of the SMS message, the mobile phone 120
10   displays, or otherwise provides, the postage verification
code to the user. The user may then subsequently apply
the postage verification code, in an appropriate manner,
to the outside of the letter/parcel to be posted.

15   When the user subsequently posts the letter/parcel, for
example at a post box or Post Office, with the postage
verification code written, printed or otherwise applied
to the outside of the letter/parcel, the letter/parcel is
transferred to a sorting office of the postal service.
20   At the sorting office, as with conventional
letters/parcels, the destination address, including the
post/zip code of the letter/parcel, is read by automated
sorting machines capable of reading alphanumeric
characters provided on the outside of letters and
25   parcels.

For the present invention, the postage verification code
is also read, and checked for validity. Each postage
verification code read from a letter/parcel is decoded,
30   for example using a decoding algorithm, and the
information used to create the code is obtained. As

- 16 -

mentioned above, such information preferably includes the
postcode of the destination address of the letter/parcel.
Further information may include: the date and/or time of
the request for the postage verification code, the mobile
5   telephone number of the user, etc.

This information can then be used to ascertain whether
the code is valid. For example, the postcode is compared
to that read from the letter/parcel to ensure that they
10 are the same. Where the date and/or time of the request
for the postage verification code are used, each postage
verification code can be provided with a valid time
period in which they may be used, and so if this time
period has expired the postage verification code is no
15 longer valid.

In an alternative embodiment, the sorting machine used to
read and check the validity of the postage verification
code is capable of communication with the Postal server
20 110. Having read the postage verification code, the
sorting machine sends the postage verification code to
the postal server 110, where it is compared to those
stored in the database 360. It will be appreciated that,
if the database is not located at the postal server 110,
25 the sorting machine will alternatively/additionally be
capable of communication with the host of the database
360, and sends the postage verification code to the host
of the database 360 to confirm that it is a valid code.

30 The host of the database 360, whether this is the postal
server 110 or not, compares the postage verification code

- 17 -

received from the sorting machine to those stored in the database. If the postage verification code received from the sorting machine matches a valid code stored in the database, the host of the database 360 informs the

5   sorting machine that the code is valid. The host may then delete the corresponding code from the database 360, or change a characteristic associated with that code to indicate that it has been used, and therefore any future uses of the code are invalid.

10

Where a postage verification code is deemed invalid, the letter/parcel to which it has been applied can be treated as if postage has not been paid (i.e. as if no stamp has been affixed to the letter/parcel).

15

In general, the SMS interface server 370 will be provided, and maintained, by the relevant network operator of the GSM network 380. Therefore, the HTML message sent to the SMS interface server 370 by the

20   postal server 110 may include the amount that the user is to be charged for the postage. The SMS interface server 370 can then extract this information from the message before converting the HTML message into an SMS message. Notably, the present invention resolves the problem of

25   financial information being sent over the Internet by including the postage to be charged to the user in the user's mobile telephone bill. Alternatively, for pre-paid mobile phone account holders, the charge may be attributed to the mobile phone account by deducting an

30   appropriate amount for the postage verification code from the user's account.

- 18 -

Referring back to Figure 1, it can be seen that the
present invention is not limited to the user requesting a
postage verification code by way of an SMS request
5   message. Any alternative means or message format of
wirelessly requesting a postage verification code may be
utilised. For example, assuming that the wireless user
has a web-enabled wireless communication device, the
wireless user may connect to the postal server 110 via
10 the Internet 140, for example by accessing a website
hosted by the postal server 110. Using the website, the
wireless user provides the information required by the
postal server 110 as well as the mobile telephone number
of the user. The postal server 110 can then generate the
15 postage verification code, and send it, for example, by
SMS to the mobile phone 120 of the user. In a similar
manner, the postal server 110 may host a wireless
application protocol (WAP) site, which the user is able
to access, for example, using a user's WAP-enabled mobile
20 phone.

In a further example, the user is able to connect to the
postal server 110 using a fixed wireline telephone, for
example over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).
25 The user can provide the postal server 110 with the
required information in any suitable manner, for example
using dual tone multi-frequency (DTMF) signals, voice
recognition software provided by the postal server 110 or
by speaking to an operator. In this context, it is
30 envisaged that a charge associated with the postage
verification code received over the PSTN can be

- 19 -

attributed/charged to the user's fixed-line phone bill.
It will be appreciated that the user using their mobile
phone 120 could also achieve this.

5   It will be understood that the method for wirelessly
obtaining a postage verification code, Postal server,
wireless communication device and corresponding postal
sorting machine, as described above, provides at least
the following advantages:

10

(i) The user is provided with the ability to
wirelessly request and receive postage verification codes
at anytime, and from anywhere, so long as the user is
able to connect to a wireless communication network, such

15   as a GSM network, using a mobile phone, or similar
wireless communication device.

(ii) The user is not restricted by requiring access
to the Internet, a problem suffered by the Deutsch Post
Stampit system.

20   (iii) The user is not required to divulge
payment/account information over the Internet, thereby
resolving another problem suffered by the Deutsch Post
Stampit method.

(iv) The user is also not required to pre-pay for
25   postage, thereby benefiting a user who infrequently sends
post or sends small amounts of post.

Whilst the specific and preferred implementations of the
embodiments of the present invention are described above,
30   it is clear that one skilled in the art could readily

P121/GB/Sen/Hepburn

- 20 -

apply variations and modifications that would still
employ the aforementioned inventive concepts.

Thus, a method for wirelessly obtaining a postage
5 verification code, a Postal server, a wireless
communication device and a corresponding postal sorting
machine have been described where the aforementioned
disadvantages with prior art arrangements have been
substantially alleviated.

P121/GB/Sen/Hepburn

— 21 —

Claims

1.   A method for obtaining a postage verification
code, the method comprising the steps of:

5   transmitting a request for a postage verification
code from a communication device to a Postal server;
            receiving said request at said Postal server;
            generating a postage verification code in
response to said request;

10   transmitting a postage verification code to said
communication device, such that a charge associated with
said postage verification code is attributed to said
communication device; and
            receiving said postage verification code at said

15 communication device.

2.   The method for obtaining a postage verification
code according to Claim 1, wherein said request and/or
said postage verification code are transmitted wirelessly

20 between said Postal server and a wireless communication
device, the method further comprising the steps of:
            providing said postage verification code to a
user of said wireless communication device; and
            applying said postage verification code on an

25 item for posting.

3.   The method for wirelessly obtaining a postage
verification code according to Claim 1 or Claim 2,
wherein the step of transmitting a request includes

30 transmitting information relating to a type of postage
required by a user of said communication device.

- 22 -

4.   The method for obtaining a postage verification
code according to Claim 3, wherein said information
relating to a type of postage includes one or more of the
5   following:
        (i) A price of postage required;
        (ii) A weight of said item to be posted;
        (iii) A class of postage;
        (iv) An indication of a destination for said item
10   to be posted.

5.   The method for obtaining a postage verification
code according to any of preceding Claims 3 or 4, wherein
the step of transmitting a request includes transmitting
15   a request to an address that corresponds to said type of
postage.

6.   The method for obtaining a postage verification
code according to any preceding Claim, wherein the step
20   of transmitting a request includes transmitting
information identifying a user of said communication
device.

7.   The method for obtaining a postage verification
25   code according to Claim 6, wherein said information
identifying a user of said communication device includes
one or more of the following:
        (i) A name of the user;
        (ii) A number associated with a wireless
30   communication device of the user;

- 23 -

(iii) An International Mobile Subscriber Identification (IMSI) number of the Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) of the user;

    (iv) An International Mobile Equipment

5   Identification (IMEI) number of the wireless communication device.

8.   The method for obtaining a postage verification code according to any preceding Claim, wherein the

10 postage verification code is generated based on information contained in the request, for example a destination post/zip code.

9.   The method for obtaining a postage verification

15 code according to any of preceding Claims 2 to 8, the method further comprising the step of:

verifying said postage verification code applied to said item at a sorting office.

20 10.   The method for obtaining a postage verification code according to any preceding of preceding Claims 2 to 9, wherein the step of transmitting a wireless request includes:

transmitting a wireless request using a GSM

25 unstructured supplementary service data message; or

transmitting a wireless request using a GSM short message service message; or

accessing a website hosted by the postal server.

30 11.   A wireless communication device adapted to perform method steps of any of Claims 1 to 10.

- 24

12.   The wireless communication device according to claim 11, wherein the wireless communication device is one of:

5   a cellular phone, a portable or mobile radio, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, a wirelessly networked PC.

13.   A Postal server adapted to perform method steps
10   of any of Claims 1 to 10.

14.   A storage medium storing processor-implementable instructions for controlling one or more processors to carry out the method of any of claims 1 to 10.
15

15.   A postal server comprising:
         an interface port, through which the postal server is capable of sending and receiving postage verification code messages or requests;
20   a decoder for receiving a request for a postage verification code from a communication device;
         an encoding software application to generate and send a postage verification code to said communication device, in response to said request, such that a charge
25   associated with said postage verification code is attributed to said communication device.

16.   The postal server according to Claim 15, wherein the encoding software application generates a postage
30   verification code based on a type of postage requested,

- 25 -

for example, based on information relating to one or more
of the following:

   (i) A price of postage required;

   (ii) A weight of said item to be posted;

5   (iii) A class of postage;

   (iv) An indication of a destination for said item
to be posted;

   (v) A destination postcode.

10 17.   The postal server according to Claim 15 or Claim
16, wherein the encoding software application generates a
postage verification code based on information
identifying a user of a wireless communication device or
a wireless communication device making said request, for
15 example, based on information relating to one or more of
the following:

   (i) A name of the user;

   (ii) A mobile telephone number of the user;

   (iii) An International Mobile Subscriber

20 Identification (IMSI) number of the Subscriber Identity
Module (SIM) of the user;

   (iv) An International Mobile Equipment
Identification (IMEI) number of the wireless
communication device.

25

18.   The postal server according to Claim 15, Claim 16
or Claim 17, the postal server further comprising a
database, operably coupled to said encoding software
application for maintaining a record of the generated
30 postage verification code, such that the record can be

- 26 -

used to validate postage of an item bearing the postage
verification code.

19.   A Postal Sorting machine adapted to verify said
5   postage verification code applied to an item in
accordance with the method steps of any of Claims 1 to
10, or the postal server of Claims 15 to 18.

20.   A method for wirelessly obtaining a postage
10 verification code substantially as hereinbefore described
with reference to, and/or as illustrated by, FIG. 2 of
the accompanying drawings.

21.   A postage verification code delivery mechanism
15 substantially as hereinbefore described with reference
to, and/or as illustrated by, FIG. 3 of the accompanying
drawings.

- 27 -

MECHANISM FOR OBTAINING AND PAYING FOR POSTAGE

Abstract

5   A method for obtaining a postage verification code
    includes the steps of transmitting a request for a
    postage verification code from a communication device to,
    and receiving the request at, a Postal server. The
    Postal server generates and sends a postage verification
10 code to the communication device, in response to the
    request, such that a charge associated with said postage
    verification code is attributed to said communication
    device. The communication device receives the postage
    verification code for subsequent applying to an item to
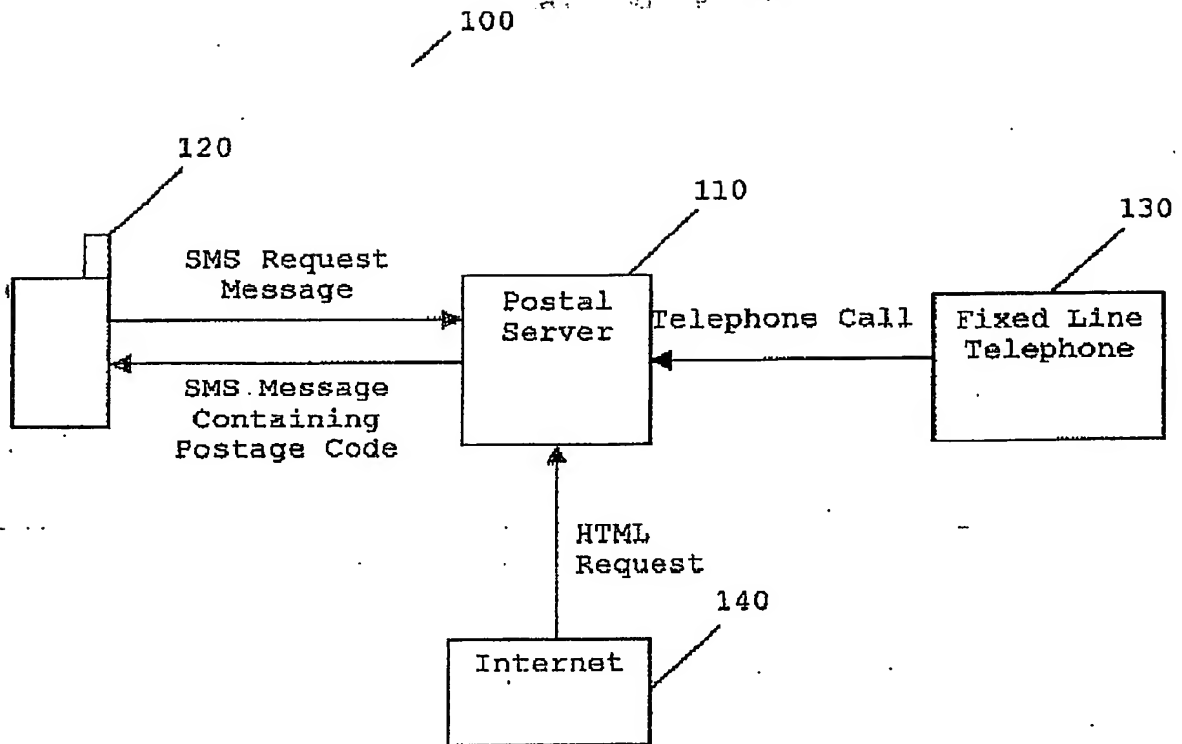15 be posted.

    In this manner, a user of say, a wireless communication
    device is provided with the ability to wirelessly request
    and receive postage verification codes at anytime, and
20 from anywhere, so long as the user is able to connect to
    a wireless communication network, such as a GSM network,
    using a mobile phone, or similar wireless communication
    device. In particular, the user can be billed for the
    postage verification code via the user's wireless
25 communication device account.

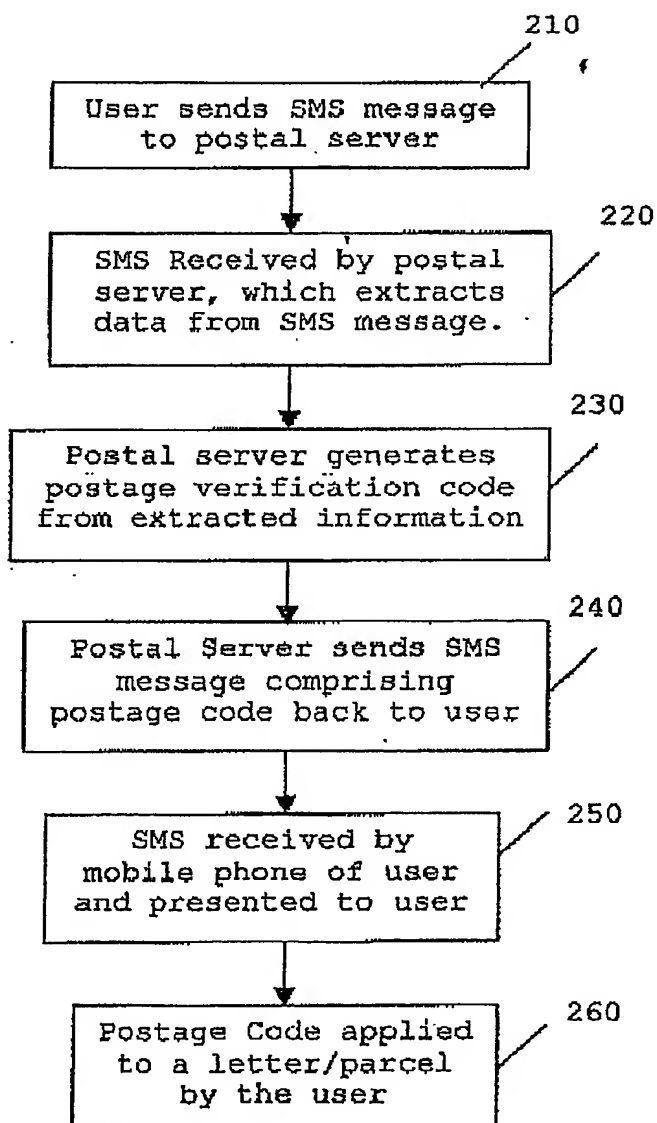{FIG. 3 to accompany abstract}

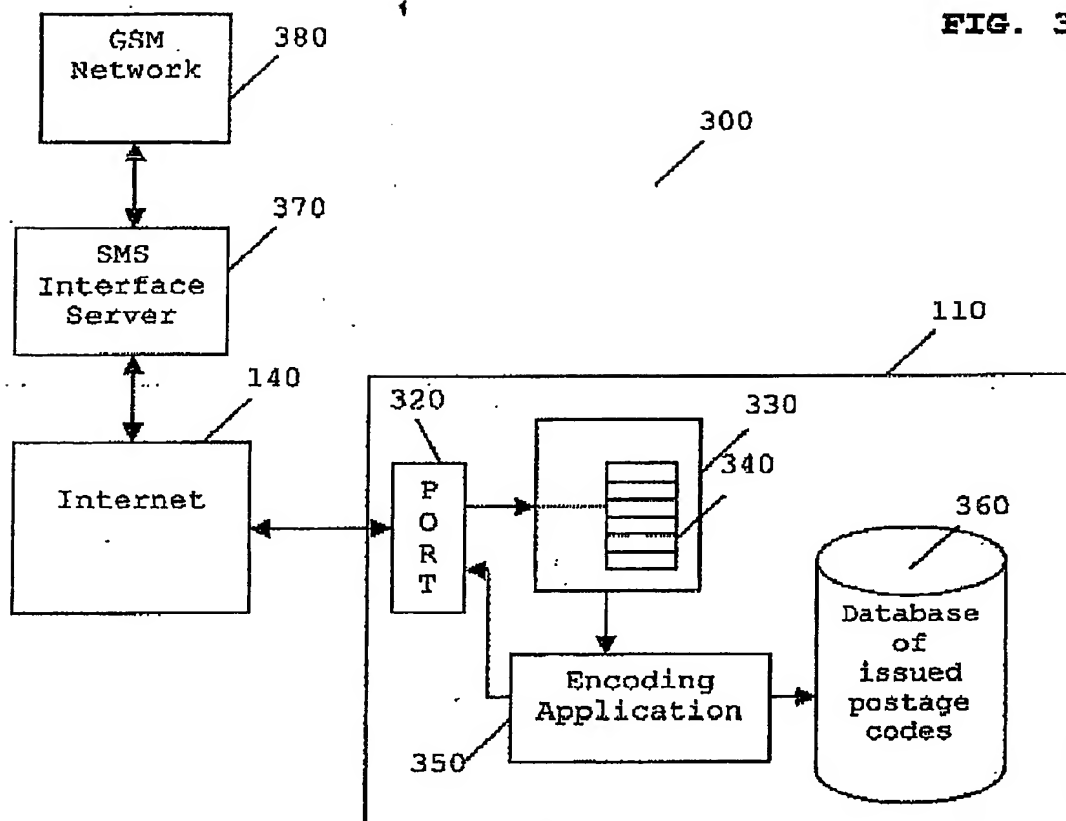P121/GB/Sen/Hepburn

1/3

FIG. 1

P121/GB/Sen/Hepburn

2/3

FIG. 2

200

┌─────────────────────────┐
│ User sends SMS message │ 210
│   to postal server   │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ SMS Received by postal │ 220
│ server, which extracts │
│ data from SMS message. │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Postal server generates │ 230
│ postage verification code│
│ from extracted information│
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Postal Server sends SMS │ 240
│   message comprising   │
│ postage code back to user│
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│   SMS received by   │ 250
│ mobile phone of user   │
│ and presented to user   │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Postage Code applied   │ 260
│   to a letter/parcel   │
│   by the user   │
└─────────────────────────┘

3/3

FIG. 3